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AUTHOR Dubin, Fraida
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ABSTRACT

The sociolinguistic research described here was carried out in connection with the bilingual education program for Navajo children by Consultants in Teaching English (CITE) for the Navajo Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. CITE's first curriculum objective is to encourage children to learn to use three distinct media: the Navajo language; the teacher's English, or "classroom English"; and "dormitory English," considered an essential "means of survival for the entering, beginning student among his peer group." A second CITE objective is to teach "detachment" towards the Navajo and English languages, an area in which the teachers' attitudes toward aides and others in the school community who speak "dormitory English" were difficult to evaluate. A special listening test of teachers' reactions was devised and carried out; results showed that degree of linguistic deviation is judged in terms of degree of education, which in turn is linked to two important aspects of the teacher aide relationship: cooperation participation and honesty dependability. Based on the results of the listening test, educational planners will have to consider whether including lessons in the CITE program which single out a variety called "dormitory English" is too high a price to pay in terms of the possible negative effect it may have. (AMM)

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The Sociolinguistic Dimension of 'Dormitory-English'*

The scope of sociolinguistics is very broad. It takes in large macro problems such as what languages are spoken in multilingual groups and societies, and how do languages persist and maintain themselves. It takes in correlative problems such as how ethnic and social class membership is reflected in language. Sociolinguists study all those aspects of language differentiation which come about because of societal and cultural factors.

One micro aspect of sociolinguistics is interest in the ways in which peoples' attitudes and beliefs are reflected in their subjective reactions to language. By studying how people react to language, by looking at what they consider to be so-called 'good' or 'bad' language, for instance, we have a key which helps us find out something about peoples' social values and stereotypes.

For example, if a linguist hears a Black child say:

nobody won't do nothing to nobody

the linguist will probably say to himself: that child speaks a variety of English in which there is reduplication of the negative element, the negative is regularly added to every indefinite pronoun and adverb.

But if a white, middle-class, Northern, urban elementary school teacher hears that same Black child say the same sentence, she might be prone to say to herself something like the following: that child has a sloppy way of speaking and he probably has a low I.Q. I wouldn't want to have him in my class.

The investigation into teachers' reactions to Navajo accented-English which is described in this paper represents an attempt to apply sociolinguistic research techniques to help answer an important tactical question which arose in a bilingual education program. This research in applied sociolinguistics was carried out in connection with the bilingual education program for Navajo six and seven-year-old children which Dr. Robert D. Wilson and his staff, Consultants in Teaching English, are providing for the Navajo Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

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At the 1969 TESOL Convention in Chicago, Dr. Wilson described the entire CITE program in detail, and outlined its important linguistic objectives. The first objective of the CITE curriculum is to encourage children to learn to use three distinct media: (1) the Navajo language, (2) the teacher's English, or 'classroom English,' and (3) a medium which Dr. Wil-

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son in his Chicago TESOL paper described as: "the English being developed by the students themselves on the playground and in the dormitory. . . this school dialect of English may be substandard to you and me, but it is a means of survival for the entering, beginning student among his peer group."

There are ample, impressionistic clues in Navajo reservation boarding school communities that there is a distinctly Navajo way of speaking English. And even outside of boarding schools, it seems to be the case that adult Navajos make use of incorrect or accented English as a source of humor and as a way of poking fun at each other. But, lacking any actual linguistic description of this dialect, the CITE classroom materials which teach children to recognize the difference between 'dormitory-English' and 'classroom-English' present as their model of 'dormitory-English' a tape-recorded, carefully prepared reading by twelve-year-old Navajo children. In other words, the model exhibits features of phonological interference from Navajo but does not attempt to present instances of grammatical interference.

The question as to whether there is a standardized, viable dialect which could be called Navajo-English is frankly a controversial one. It may turn out that there are both phonological and grammatical features which are predictable in the speech of speakers of Navajo background. However, it is a question which must be put aside until more work has been done on the problem. Instead, the focus in this paper is on the sociolinguistic question of peoples' attitudes toward accented-English, and specifically how attitudes can be taken into account in educational planning.

Dr. Wilson's proposal for teaching young children what amounts to trilingual switching rules, namely for children to learn to hear and later to use three distinct media of expression, each in their appropriate settings and surroundings, is a point of view which stems from the latest findings in the field of bilingualism. It is a point of view which emphasizes the psychological capability of the human species for multilingualism and multidialectalism.

Monolinguals, too, operate with switching rules which trigger differences in stylistic use of language. In the same way, people who are bilingual or multilingual operate with automatic rules which trigger the use of one language or another. This psychological view of bilingualism has enabled bilingual education programs to be built around the understanding that bilingualism is not a handicap in the psychological sense. Bilingualism does not hinder a child from learning; rather, it is the way in which the school regards his bilingualism that can hurt the child. From the psycholinguistic point

of view, teaching trilingual switching rules is not going to break the circuit.

Dr. Wilson stated that the second objective is to teach what he has called "detachment" towards the Navajo and English languages. Teaching "detachment" towards language might turn out to be a plausible psycholinguistic goal to set for six-year-olds. For, in their case the social norms of language usage are still developing. However, if we look at the proposal from a sociolinguistic view, entirely different questions emerge.

One such question about "detachment towards language" has to do with the two adults who implement the CITE materials in each classroom. The CITE program depends upon both a classroom teacher (in most but not all cases the teacher is non-Navajo and in Navajoland dialect is designated 'Anglo'), and a classroom aide (in most but not all cases the aide is Navajo). The teacher and aide must work together as a team. At the beginning of the school year, the Navajo-speaking aide sets the tone for a relaxed, friendly atmosphere in which children are free to speak in Navajo when they wish. Throughout the day, the aide and the teacher work together. The aide must know the lesson plans as carefully as the teacher does.

If there are derogatory stereotypes which Anglos (and perhaps Navajos, too) hold towards speakers of 'dormitory English,' how will these negative attitudes affect the important relationship between classroom teacher and aide? If the Navajo aide is called upon to participate in lessons which present a variety of English which Anglo members of the school community reject and associate, even covertly, with undesirable characteristics, will the teacher-aide relationship suffer?

This was the question which it was decided might be fruitfully investigated by means of sociolinguistic research techniques. The investigator wanted to know if there is any pattern to the value judgments applied by Anglo teachers to Navajo accented-English. One way to go about finding the answer to this question could have been by simply asking teachers outright what they think about aides and others in the school community who speak 'dormitory-English.' But there was a limitation to this approach. First, there is a prevailing attitude of concerned enlightenment among the teacher population we were dealing with. In short, to show your prejudices overtly doesn't seem to be popular in American life today. Besides, we knew from other experiences in implementing educational programs that teachers tend to tell specialists from the big city what they think the specialists want to hear. Devices other than a straightforward questionnaire, for ex-

ample, seemed to be necessary.

It was decided instead to carry out a listening test. Subjects -- primary grade teachers in Navajo reservation BIA boarding schools, none of whom were using CITE materials -- were asked to respond to taped samples of Navajo accented-English by rating the speakers they heard in five categories: (1) degree of education, (2) cooperation-participation, (3) honesty-dependabilty, (4) likes children, and (5) maintains discipline.

The listening test was designed to help provide answers to the following questions: First, is there a difference in the reaction to speakers with phonological errors alone as against the reaction to speakers who exhibited both grammatical and phonological errors. It was felt that this was a significant question since the model of 'dormitory-English' which is now packaged into CITE materials only represents phonological deviation.

Second, to find out whether teachers respond judgmentally to Navajo accented-English, it was necessary to locate a value which is held in common by the Anglo teachers' community. It was felt that we could accurately predict that teachers consider 'degree of education' to be an important asset. The second question was: do teachers link 'degree of education' to the degree of deviation in English?

Third, and probably the most significant question in terms of the results of the listening test, are other values systematically linked to 'degree of education.' When the teacher assesses the aide, there appear to be two relationships which she considers: the one between herself and the aide and the one between the aide and the children. So the characteristics for a good classroom aide were divided between those which applied to the teacher-aide relationship and those which applied to the aide-children relationship. Would either of these two relationships be more strongly linked to 'degree of education?'

Constructing the test tape was a crucial task. Samples had been collected of aides both reading and telling in their own words the text of a commercially published picture-book about Navajo family life. The story is called Stephannie and the Coyote. These samples were gathered from visits to many classrooms where the aide was first asked to read from the picture-book and later to tell the story in her own words while holding the book for the children to see. This device was used as a way to build into the tape a contrast between phonological interference -- or 'reading style' -- and phonological plus grammatical interference -- or 'story-telling style.' From the samples collected, speakers were selected who represented three de-

grees of deviation: minimal, moderate, and maximal. The three degrees of deviation were subjectively designated by the principal investigator.

It turned out that in order to have a maximal representative on the tape, it was necessary to use a reading done by a guise speaker. The guise speaker was a highly experienced Anglo who could imitate the mistakes in English which are characteristic of some Navajos. There were two motivating factors for using a guise speaker. The first was purely linguistic. It assured us that the segment in 'reading style' only contained phonological errors. This part of the test tape was made by having the guise speaker read from a carefully constructed script which contained most of the phonological errors which a contrastive analysis of Navajo and English predict will occur. The second reason for using a guise speaker represented a kind of "sociolinguistic intuition." There was no Navajo speaker who qualified as one who would show maximal deviation whom we could ask to tape-record the story without arousing just those feelings of sensitivity which the test had set out to investigate.

The teacher-subjects were told they would hear six different aides. None of the subjects detected that the maximal speaker was anything but another aide. Nor did any of the subjects detect that they were hearing three speakers, each in two different styles and situations.

The listening test was conducted individually in school settings. Each interview lasted at least a half hour. The listening part of the test took 12 minutes. Each of the six sections on the tape lasted two minutes. None were replayed for the subjects. The first -- or non-listening part of the test -- consisted of informal conversation around a series of ordered questions. The last question concerned the teacher's experience with Navajo classroom aides and her recommendations for important characteristics to look for in an aide.

The teacher-subjects were told they would hear six aides either reading or telling the same story. The subject was asked to rate each aide in the five categories on a scale of 0 - 5. '0' equalled 'very poor' and '5' equalled 'excellent.' Most teachers were willing to go along with the comment that we often judge people on the basis of their voices or how they sound to us. During the listening test, the teacher-subjects were able to look at the picture book.

We prefer to call the results of the test interesting indications. Table I represents the difference between phonological errors alone versus

phonological plus grammatical errors, or 'reading style' versus 'story-telling style.' A hypothesis had been formulated that each of the three speaker's story-telling styles would receive a higher number of points because of the appeal and dramatic quality of the voice in such a child-centered activity. This hypothesis turned out to be incorrect. 'Reading style' was favored as indicated in the total number of points for all categories for each speaker. The implication in Table I seems to be that if the teacher does hold negative judgments to Navajo-accented speech, they are less likely to appear when phonological deviation alone is displayed. The importance of this finding lies in its relevancy to the tape recorded model of 'dormitory English' which currently is used in the CITE materials. Table I indicates intra-speaker results, or the difference between two styles for each speaker, or intra-speaker style-switching.

Table II gives inter-speaker results. Do teachers link 'degree of education' to degree of deviation. Table II indicates that the Maximal speaker is consistently given a low score for 'degree of education.' The speaker with Minimal deviation was consistently given a high score. In both Tables I and II, the sharpest contrast seems to occur between the Maximal and Moderate degrees. The Moderate and Minimal degrees fall quite close together. Table II shows that there was a correlation between the teachers' standard of English and their judgment of the speakers' 'degree of education.'

The question in Table III was: is 'degree of education' systematically linked to either of the two relationships: teacher-aide, or aide-children? Along with 'degree of education,' the teacher-subjects graded each speaker in four additional categories. These included two which dealt with the teacher-aide relationship, (1) cooperation-participation (2) dependability-honesty, and two which dealt with the aide-children relationship, (1) likes children (2) maintains discipline. The indication in Table III is that there seems to be a strong link between 'degree of education' and the teacher-aide relationship. However, there appeared little indication of systematic shared values either positive or negative between 'degree of education' and the aide-children relationship.

To summarize the test indications in Tables II and III: Table II indicates that these teacher-subjects judged degree of deviation in terms of 'degree of education.' Table II gives the total score for the category 'education' for each of the three speakers in both styles. In Table II, the distinction between reading style and story-telling style has been disregarded.

Table III indicates the correlation which held between 'education' and

and the other four categories. To arrive at this correlation, each score sheet was examined for the number of points assigned to 'education.' Then the range into which the score fell was counted as being either high or low. High was defined as a score which ranged between 3 -→ 5 points, and low was a score which ranged between 0 -→ 2 points. In the same way, high or low was counted for the other four categories. Next, the highs and lows were totaled for all the subjects. If there was agreement among 14 out of the 19 subjects (or slightly less than 75%), the particular category was entered into Table III as high or low. Lack of agreement was shown in Table III by means of a dash (--).

The results of Table II had shown that degree of linguistic deviation is judged in terms of 'degree of education.' Talbe III, in turn, indicates that 'degree of education' is linked to two important aspects of the teacher-aide relationship: cooperation-participation and honesty-dependability.

Based on the results of the listening test, particularly the results shown in Table III, educational planners will have to consider whether including lessons in the CITE bilingual education program which single out a variety called 'dormitory-English' is too high a price to pay in terms of the possible negative effect it may have on the teacher-aide relationship.

The aim in this paper has been to point out how sociolinguistic research techniques can have important implications for educational programs. Man's psychological capability for language represents only half of the linguistic universe. The social function of language represents the other half.

-- Fraida Dubin
UCLA and CITE

TABLE NO. I

Phonological Deviation vs. Phonological + Grammatical Deviation:

(total number of points for all categories in each of two styles)

Speaker A	reading style:	464
Speaker A'	story-telling style:	458
Speaker B	reading style:	357
Speaker B'	story-telling style:	347
Speaker C	reading style:	124
Speaker C'	story-telling style:	115

TABLE NO. II

Education and Linguistic Deviation:

(each speaker's total score for the category 'education')

Speaker A Minimal Deviation	144
Speaker B Moderate Deviation	128
Speaker C Maximal Deviation	48

TABLE NO. III

Correlation Between Education and Other Categories:

(Scores are shown in the Table below as 'low' or 'high' if there was agreement among 75% of teacher-subjects. A score of 3 -> 5 points = 'high'; 0 -> 2 = 'low'; dashes (--) indicates no agreement.)

		Relationship: Teacher-Aide		Relationship: Aide-Children	
	Degree of Education	Cooperation - Participation	Honesty - Dependability	Likes Children	Maintains Discipline
Speaker A	high	high	high	--	--
Speaker A'	high	high	high	high	--
Speaker B	high	high	high	--	--
Speaker B'	low	--	high	--	--
Speaker C	low	low	low	high	--
Speaker C'	low	low	low	--	--